

MONTANA BOARD OF REGENTS OF HIGHER EDUCATION

Policy and Procedures Manual

SUBJECT: ACADEMIC AFFAIRS

Policy 303.1 – Academic Program Proposals

Adopted: October 19, 1973; Revised: March 4, 2016; Revised November 22, 2019

I. Board policy:

A. The commissioner of higher education shall establish a process whereby institutions of the Montana University System may propose new postsecondary educational program offerings or modifications to existing offerings.

B. The board of regents will monitor all such academic proposals through notification or request for approval at regular meetings of the board. The commissioner shall determine the level of review and/or action necessary for each item.

C. Additional details concerning the academic proposal process established by the commissioner of higher education, including required documentation, will be made available by the commissioner via the ~~Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, Academic and Student Affairs section of the~~ Montana University System website.

D. When developing academic proposals, all institutions are encouraged to collaborate rather than duplicate existing programmatic offerings. Unnecessary duplication will be taken in to consideration by the commissioner of higher education and the board of regents when evaluating proposals.

E. In all instances, the board of regents may request additional information or require a report from outside consultants to analyze the proposal.

F. When considering program proposals, the commissioner and board may consider, among other criteria, whether:

- i. The proposed program aligns with the MUS strategic plan, the campus mission, and the campus mission parameters as defined in BOR Policy 219.1.
- ii. The proposed program demonstrates convincing evidence of student demand, employer demand, or societal need.
- iii. The proposed program avoids unnecessarily duplication and cannot be delivered more efficiently through collaboration or alternative arrangements.
- iv. The projected benefits to the state outweigh the costs of the proposed program.
- v. The institution has the capacity to deliver the proposed program to an acceptable degree of quality with existing and projected resources.

II. Review of new academic programs

A. The commissioner of higher education shall establish a process whereby newly approved academic programs will be reviewed. The commissioner shall determine the level of review necessary for each such program.

B. The commissioner shall determine thresholds for adequate enrollment in newly approved academic programs. Programs failing to meet these thresholds shall either develop an action plan for improvement for review and approval by the board of regents or shall be placed into moratorium. The commissioner shall set what level of performance corresponds with each sanction.

C. Additional details concerning the new academic program review process established by the commissioner of higher education, including required documentation, will be made available by the commissioner via the Montana University System website.

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III. Definitions

A. Postsecondary educational program - A series of courses arranged in a scope or sequence leading to a degree, certificate, option, major, or minor where a major does not already exist.

B. Degree - A specific designation of letters representing the words on the diploma indicating completion or attainment (e.g., A.A, A.S., B.A., B.S., B.Arch., B.B.A., M.A., M.F.A., Ed.D., D.A., Ph.D).

C. Certificate of Technical Studies - Awarded upon successful completion of a short program of study culminating in an industry-recognized credential, a credential supporting other academic programs, a credential focused on a specific area of skill and knowledge, and/or an added specialty or upgraded credential within an occupational area. Usually, certificate programs are at least 12 credits and no more than 29 credits in length and do not require the related instruction/general education courses used for Certificates of Applied Science and academic degrees (e.g., A.A.S., A.S., B.S., etc).

D. Certificate of Applied Science - Awarded upon completion of a program of study at least 30 credits in length preparing students for entry-level employment in the career/technical area indicated by the Certificate of Applied Science title (e.g., Certificate of Applied Science in Bookkeeping). As required by Northwest Commission on Colleges and Universities, these certificate programs include a recognizable body of instruction in computation, communication, and human relations. Specific expectations for the Certificate of Applied Science are provided in BOR Policy 301.12.

E. Major - The specific field of concentration for the degree. A designated and coherent sequence of courses in a discipline, related disciplines, or professional area in which a student concentrates as a part of a baccalaureate degree program. The requirements of the major are usually defined by one academic department; but may be defined jointly by two or more departments in the case of an interdisciplinary major. Majors may range from 30 to 48 semester hours, half of which must be at the upper division level. Study in the major will conclude with a capstone, integrating experience in which the knowledge and skills learned in the major are applied or demonstrated.

F. Extended Major - Where required by professional expectations or specialized accreditation standards, extended majors may be offered in undergraduate programs. The extended major may require up to 80 hours.

G. Minor - The supporting or complementary field undertaken along with a major for a degree. A designated and coherent sequence of courses in a discipline, related disciplines, or professional area which provides support or enhancement of a student's major in a baccalaureate program. Minors may range from 18 to 30 semester hours of credit, one-third of which must be at the upper division level.

H. Option - One of two or more alternative tracks available to students in an associate degree, baccalaureate minor or major or graduate degree program. Each option consists of a core of required courses in the program plus required and/or elective courses in the specialty area indicated by the title of the option. The core of required courses must constitute at least one-third of the hours required for the program.

History:

ITEM 2-001-R0973, (Revised), October 19, 1973, as revised April 11, 1978; ITEM 24-001-R0579, Changes in Institutional Organization, May 30, 1979; ITEM 2-001-R0973, as revised June 14, 1990; November 18, 1999 (ITEM 104-103-R0999); September 21, 2000 (ITEM 108-101-R0700); March 18, 2005 (ITEM 126-101-R0305), and approved May 31, 2007 (ITEM 135-102-R0507); revised and approved May 28, 2010 (ITEM 147-106-R0510). Revised extensively March 4, 2016 (Item 170-101-R031

